

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY-OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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7 July 1966

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MEMORANDUM TO : DOD - Mr. McNaughton
ACDA - Dr. Flax
CIA - Mr. Fisher 25X1A
White House - Mr. Keeny
- Mr. Charles Johnson
NASC - Mr. Welsh
NASA - Mr. Seamans

SUBJECT : Report of the NSAM 156 Committee on
"Political and Security Aspects of
Non-Military Applications of Satellite
Earth-Sensing"

1. Attached is the revised report on "Political and Security Aspects of Non-Military Applications of Satellite Earth-Sensing", taking into account your comments at the meeting on July 6 (for which we shall not prepare minutes).

2. I would appreciate your informing Mr. Garthoff (Code 182, X 2579) of your concurrence, or of any comments or dissents, as soon as possible so that we can ascertain whether a session will be needed on Monday at 11:00 a.m. to "clean-up" the report.


U. Alexis Johnson

Enclosure:

Report on "Political and
Security Aspects of Non-Military
Applications of Satellite Earth-Sensing"

State Dept. review completed

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Political and Security Aspects of Non-
Military Applications of Satellite Earth-Sensing

1. The NSAM 156 Committee has reviewed the issues raised in the letter of April 4 from Mr. Charles L. Schultze and Dr. Donald F. Hornig to Secretary of State Dean Rusk (Appendix A), and submits the following report of its conclusions.

2. We believe that the "Report on Political and Informational Aspects of Satellite Reconnaissance Policy" prepared pursuant to NSAM 156 and approved on June 30, 1962, for transmittal to the President remains basically valid. The objective of avoiding open challenges to satellite observation activity has been generally met, and the Soviet Union has muted -- though not retracted -- its challenge to the principle of military space reconnaissance. Agreement has been reached on fundamental legal principles which do not ban (though they also do not explicitly sanction) space observation. Also, since 1962 the Soviets have developed a major operational satellite reconnaissance program of their own. Developments over the past four years have, therefore, led to a shift of emphasis from a need for actions that will build world acceptance of space observations, then a generally novel idea, to actions which will preserve the present wide tacit acceptance of such activities. Accordingly, there does not seem to be any imperative to launch disclosure initiatives for the purpose of furthering the general principle of space observation. On the other hand, it remains necessary to consider the possibly adverse effects of new public disclosures or other initiatives which could upset the present satisfactory situation.

3. Our chief concern over a challenge to the legitimacy and propriety of satellite reconnaissance has been the Soviet position. Over the past several years, the Russians have withdrawn insistence on branding such activity as illegal in the cases of international space agreements that they desired, and they do not press such arguments in the UN, but they have not stopped referring to such activities as espionage and as illegal. Moreover, the statements by Khrushchev and his son-in-law, Adzhubei, admitting such

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and tacitly acquiescing in American activities

Soviet activities) have never been printed in the Soviet press or acknowledged as official, and they have not been even informally repeated by the present Soviet leaders. Accordingly, we see continuing pertinence of the NSAM 156 Report conclusion that: "It is extremely important that the US avoid public statements about our satellite operations that would pose a direct political challenge to the Soviet Union on the sensitive issue of reconnaissance."

4. It is now necessary to give more attention than heretofore to the reactions of other countries. To date, increasing public awareness of the existence of US and Soviet military space reconnaissance has not prompted concern in other countries for their own political or military security interests, but such concern is likely to develop as others become more aware of the nature and scope of satellite surveillance. Disclosure of surveillance capabilities, even indirectly in non-military contexts, will awaken new interest and in some cases concern. Accordingly, any such disclosure should be carefully considered and planned so as to prevent or reduce adverse reactions by other states that would be undesirable in their own right and could also be manipulated to our detriment by the Soviet Union.

5. Direct disclosure of satellite reconnaissance for the purpose of gaining world acceptance of the principle of space surveillance is both unnecessary and liable to provoke adverse reactions from the USSR and other states. On the other hand, in the long run the security of our reconnaissance program can be served by encouraging the present natural, gradual growing world recognition of the potentialities of satellite earth-sensing in the context of scientific progress and economic betterment. Such recognition will grow whether we stimulate it or not. We can influence and channel, and if we wish retard, such a development -- but we cannot prevent it. We should recognize that any apparent US efforts to suppress or hobble peaceful applications because of presumed (and rightly presumed) sensitivity over protecting military reconnaissance would not serve our objective of retaining or improving tacit acceptance of unrestricted earth observation and sensing. A US position of favoring, leading, and sharing in non-military applications of satellite earth-sensing will not involve the same risks of provoking

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a confrontation with the Soviet Union as would direct disclosure of reconnaissance. We should insure, insofar as possible, that these initiatives are not construed by the Soviets as likely to result in general disclosure of information about her military capabilities which the USSR wishes to protect.

6. As noted above, non-military uses of space which require surveillance of the earth by various sensors would as a side effect inevitably stimulate wider awareness of the capabilities of reconnaissance, but in a more favorable context than would direct disclosure. We should recognize that different uses of any technology will continue to evoke different reactions. The familiar home, travel and hobby uses of ordinary cameras do not lessen objections to their use for intelligence collection. The same will be true of satellite cameras, and the Soviets have already shifted their position several years ago to objecting to the use of satellite intelligence collection, rather than objecting to satellite observation per se. (If in the future the Russians tacitly admit to having reconnaissance satellites of their own -- as Brezhnev did for the first time in a speech on July 1 -- they would probably still claim that intelligence collection by the United States served different and nefarious purposes.) This does not, however, seem to be a valid basis for opposing development of concurrent non-military and continued military reconnaissance programs.

7. NASA's and other proposals for developing earth-sensing programs which might overlap, be derived in modified form from, or stimulate public interest in, classified reconnaissance programs should be judged on the basis of criteria such as feasibility, preference to non-space alternatives, cost, problems in protecting classified technology, and risks of security compromise of the classified reconnaissance program. It should usually be possible by careful planning to mitigate possible diverse political repercussions of the incidental disclosure of surveillance capabilities and hence to give political and national security clearance to such programs. The best justification for such programs, and the best general basis for calming any alarm over their effects, will be valid scientific or economic payoff in which other countries can expect to share.

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8. The primary area of competition in space between the United States and the Soviet Union has been and will for the next few years continue to be the race to the moon. This is, however, largely a short term competition for the 1960's. In the longer run, there may develop a competition in space applications developing the resources of the world, particularly of the underdeveloped world. Communications satellites and meteorological satellites have already contributed to this end, but their benefits do not exhaust the potential value of earth-sensing satellites for developing and using natural resources.

9. In the deliberations of this Committee, differences of view arose over the relative merits of using satellites or aircraft for natural resource surveys and other earth-sensing activities in the "reconnaissance range" of satellite sensing (that is, roughly below 20 meters in precision of ground resolution). This Committee has not attempted to resolve such differences; they clearly reflect an important question, but our present focus is on political and security guidelines for use of such satellite programs in this range, as may be determined to be economically and scientifically justified. In addition, there would appear to be unresolved questions with respect to the alternatives of using unmanned or manned satellites for these purposes.

10. A natural resources program of the kind in which NASA is interested can in time provide vast data, using a variety of spaceborne sensors. The NASA program as now envisaged does not include operational use of remote-sensing techniques before the 1970s, principally because most of the sensors are presently programmed for use in sophisticated manned spacecraft as part of the Apollo Applications Program. However, experimental programs might be initiated as early as 1968. There is no funding as yet of less complex, less expensive unmanned systems.

11. One current problem which emerges is the question of use of certain equipment and photographic materials from the classified reconnaissance program to assist NASA in evaluating the utility of, and developing techniques for, satellite photography for exploiting natural resources. In order to develop a thorough understanding of observation satellite technology, it would seem desirable to consider whether NASA can be provided -- on a classified basis, but

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13. The United States will, in any case, find it increasingly difficult to control public disclosure of satellite surveillance capabilities. To date the US and the USSR have maintained tacitly acknowledged but unpublicized mutual reconnaissance surveillance. Lately, the USSR has shown what may be indications of a slight loosening up of their own reticence to discuss satellite sensing capabilities by releasing TV photographs of the earth taken by the Molniya satellite, and by publishing in their own press earlier US-released Gemini photographs (without attribution of the source). These steps suggest a possible Soviet willingness to accustom the world to the idea that non-reconnaissance photography from space is a normal activity, and could foreshadow an openly acknowledged future Soviet satellite program for earth-sensing and natural resources development. (The USSR may also use this knowledge later to attempt to undercut the American position on disarmament verification, and as noted earlier this would not necessarily imply any softening of Soviet objection to open acknowledgement of reconnaissance.) Other countries, too, may be contemplating similar programs. Recent French studies of the use of aerial photography for geographic uses have indicated an interest in the use of space platforms as well as aircraft. This interest is not surprising; France is only the first of several countries with developing space programs which will be investigating useful economic or scientific satellite programs in an area that has not already been preempted by the USA or the USSR. In the likelihood that other countries will soon be operating or at least openly ~~would~~ discussing the use of observation satellites, it might be to the US advantage to be prepared to take the lead in such discussions and activities. Indeed, at some point we may wish to consider cooperative and collaborative programs not only with other countries in Western Europe and Japan, but even with the USSR, if the political climate were appropriate.

14. The United States should consider steps to apply its highly developed and developing photographic capabilities for the benefit of the underdeveloped countries. In this way the United States can be in a position to provide tangible evidence of our interest in helping developing countries, while forestalling or overmatching possible Soviet propaganda initiative in that field. This will require consideration of a whole range of political, as

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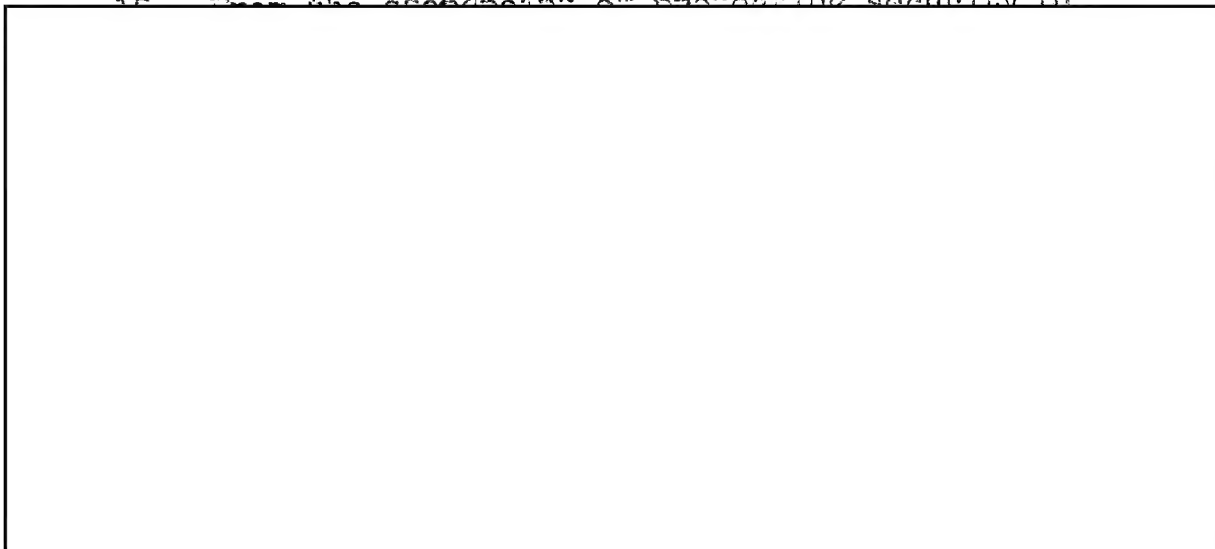
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well as scientific-technical and security, factors. For example, merely advising developing countries of new resources and opportunities will not always win us plaudits if we are not prepared to assist these countries in realizing these potentialities. Nonetheless, in the longer run there would appear to be real political opportunities to us in taking a more active role than the Soviet Union in applying satellite earth observation to non-military economic uses. This long-run political interest reinforces other reasons for developing the potentialities or non-military uses of earth-sensing by satellites.

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15. From the standpoint of protecting security of



16. At some point, probably after there had been further initial exploratory study and if the program proved practicable, it would appear that the United States -- perhaps the President himself -- might launch a major public program. At that time, experimental NASA aerial and space photographs could be released, and NASA program plans and expectations described -- all without mention of the classified program. Such an initiative would maximize political gains for the United States. It could, of course, also prompt prominent speculation about classified reconnaissance activities, but such speculation could probably be fended off, and possible hostile Soviet reactions would probably be foreclosed or undercut by the wide interest that the program should generate. However, the question of whether and how any such initiative should be made should probably be deferred at this time, and in any case will require further careful consideration.

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17. It should be noted that public recognition, even on an incomplete basis, of satellite observation capabilities would also have reverberations in other fields. For example, public awareness of such capabilities should assist in building a consensus in support of disarmament proposals which rely on satellite surveillance. The existence of an openly acknowledged photographic satellite system, even with poorer quality products, would under some circumstances give the US government an additional option: to make public use of satellite photography to prove a violation of an agreement to a world forum, without disclosure of the classified reconnaissance program. In the absence of such a publicly known system, it might be more difficult to make a convincing case that a violation had indeed occurred. At the same time, it may also be used by others to argue against requirements for other verification measures in cases where such requirements remain. By and large, however, disclosure of surveillance capabilities within the limits we are suggesting would probably facilitate distinguishing * between what satellite observation can and cannot verify for the purposes of disarmament negotiations.

18. Recommendations:

(1) The classified national reconnaissance program should be protected by careful consideration of the political, as well as technical proliferation, effects of public discussion of earth-sensing activities of any given nature and level of surveillance capability.

(2) There is potential great political capital in a US program of national resource surveys and other scientific and economic exploitation of satellite earth observation and sensing, provided the basis has been properly laid, and the announcement of such a program is able to draw upon and project viable economic promise. Further consideration should therefore be given to a major political initiative advancing the concept of economic betterment through space activities. If such an initiative is decided upon, it should come at a time when sufficient work has been done to demonstrate the potentialities and offer reasonable promise of some early payoff.

(3) At present, and for the next several years, from the standpoint of political and security considerations

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be made available for NASA's program of non-military applications of satellite earth-sensing. It is recognized that substantial compartmentalization will probably have to remain, but the non-military programs should be enabled to profit from relevant achievements of the military program to the extent feasible.

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